

between Ashbridge's Bay and the Exhibition Grounds near Toronto on August 30; the Pectoral and Baird's Sandpipers on September 1; the White-rumped Sandpiper on September 30; the Osprey flying over the Exhibition Grounds near Toronto on August 30; the Rusty Blackbird between Galt and Dundas on September 27 and near Kitchener several times subsequently, and the Snow Bunting at the outskirts of Kitchener on November 3.—G. W. KNECHTEL, *Kitchener, Ont.*

BIRD BANDING NEWS

Conducted by Wm. I. Lyon

Some Experiences in Bird Banding

By Mrs. Marie Dales

I have often been asked how I came to take up bird banding. When we moved to our present home, I found so many birds already there, that I determined to try to keep them and attract others. The Western Meadowlark sang all fall while we were building. In the spring I found a pair of Cedar Waxwings nesting in a cottonwood tree just below our house.

I soon discovered that I would have to employ some means of ridding the place of English Sparrows: they came in hordes and ate the food provided for the other birds. So, in the first part of July, 1923, I invested in a sparrow trap. In exactly two months I had trapped one thousand English Sparrows. The catch for the entire season was 1,125. Last year we caught only 878. And even with this reduction of these birds we have been compelled to keep up a constant warfare on them all spring. I have torn their nests out of our nest boxes, only to find them building again the next morning. We simply cannot have sparrows and song birds together.

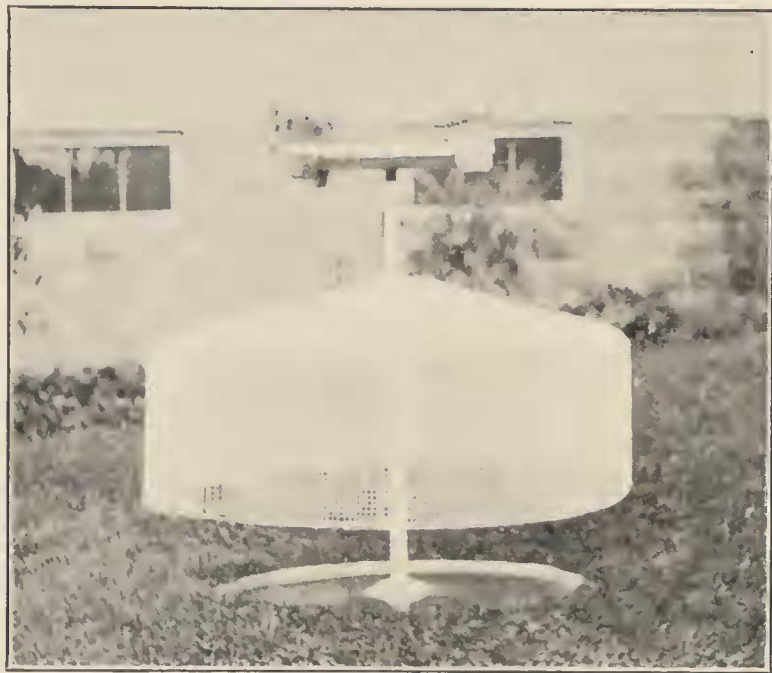
Besides sparrows, other birds frequently came into our trap. The thought came to me that these birds could be banded before they were released. And as I thought more about the wonderful possibilities in thus identifying these migratory visitors, I decided to undertake it. By the time I had received my federal permit it was rather late in the season, and still later when I received my supply of bands. But the following spring found me prepared. With the Brown Thrashers predominating the year before, I felt quite certain that the first bird to wear one of my bands would be a thrasher; and it was.

One of the interesting phases of this work is the opportunity to study the differences in the ways birds react to the trapping and handling process. Of course, we are not surprised to find birds of different species behaving differently; but there are also differences in behavior in birds of the same species. This is probably an indication of temperament in birds. Some birds are more nervous than others. The first Robin to be trapped was a male, and he yelled so lustily for help that several other Robins came to his assistance; one of these was a female which entered the trap, and this led me to think that she must be his mate. Later observations proved that this was not the case, however. Some birds are very docile, while others will struggle and bite. The Cowbird nearly always bites. Only once did a Bluebird show fight. Most Catbirds are timid and nervous, and seldom bite. Harris's Sparrow rarely shows any nervousness, and I have never had one bite me. I have had Brown Thrashers, Catbirds, Harris's

Sparrows, and Robins remain in my open hand for some little time. One Robin remained in that position until I counted fifty, then he hopped to the ground and leisurely walked away.

To trap the Bluebirds and wrens I had to devise some other method, as they would not go into the sparrow trap. I made a landing net by lacing some mosquito netting over an embroidery hoop. Watching my opportunity I would slip up and place the net over the hole of the nest box. The male will leave the box at the slightest disturbance, while the female will remain with the young.

In the case of the first pair of House Wrens which I banded, the male left home never to return—not even to help feed the young. He began to build in



THE DROP BATH TRAP DESIGNED AND USED BY MRS. DALES.

a box in a nearby tree, while the female remained with the young until they left the nest. Then she went to the new home her mate was building. She stayed there only a few days, and then I did not see her again; just what happened I do not know. The male built and sang, but remained mateless for the rest of the season.

The second pair of wrens nested in a box on a window casing. I had no trouble in getting the male in the net, but the female was too wily for the mosquito netting. I finally resorted to a hair net and got her, but she lost her tail in the operation. It may have been the mortification of losing her tail that prompted her to remain away all afternoon. At dusk she came shame-facedly creeping back, to be soundly berated by an irate mate left alone to feed the family all that time.

The trapping and banding of birds presents an opportunity for the study of abnormal conditions. Among the Catbirds there was one who was unable to close his beak for a long time. His voice was squeaky, and remained so all summer. Another Catbird had lost the right foot. Later I trapped him and examined him carefully. The first joints of both inner and outer toes of the left foot were also missing. I believe this condition had been brought about by disease rather than by banding. I banded him on the left leg.

Late in the fall I trapped a Robin with the lower mandible broken and bent back to the chin. Two weeks later I saw him in Grandview Park busily pecking away with his upper mandible. His plumage was ill-kept. Three days later I saw him again in my back yard. He then seemed quite fit and able to survive.

The banding of nestlings is very unsatisfactory and unproductive of results. The mortality is too great. Sooner or later the trapper is sure to have some fatalities. I have had two. A Brown Thrasher and a Chipping Sparrow were caught under the drop trap before they were fully inside.

As the work progresses one is constantly on the alert for new trapping methods and new baits, which will entice new kinds of birds to the traps. For bait I use bread, fruit, grapes, cottage cheese, and table scraps of many kinds. Later in the season I have found that dogwood berries (*Cornus asperifolia*) are a splendid bait for Bluebirds, Robins, and Flickers. The Flickers came all winter for the berries.

Birds are a little like people—they learn to like some things. At first the Bluebirds paid no attention to the food tray. Before the season was over I frequently saw them partaking of bread and cheese. One day the male Bluebird, apparently tired of feeding the youngsters, brought them to the food tray and left them to help themselves.

The total number of birds trapped and banded from May 2 to November 7 was 170. They were caught in various traps, as follows:

Bath trap	64
Drop trap	44
Sparrow trap	33
On nest	15
Gathering cage	9
Landing net	5

The sparrow trap was operated through the entire season; the drop trap from June 24 to October 1; and the bath trap from October 1 to November 7.

It may be a matter of interest to some readers to know the species banded, and the number of each, which is here given: Robin, 33; Harris's Sparrow, 28; Catbird, 27; Brown Thrasher, 24; Chipping Sparrow, 16; Bluebird, 14; House Wren, 9; Cowbird, 5; Slate-colored Junco, 4; Mourning Dove, 2; Myrtle Warbler, 2; Flicker, Goldfinch, Orchard Oriole, Pine Siskin, White-crowned Sparrow, and Bronzed Grackle, one each.

A Bluebird and Harris's Sparrow each repeated once; two Harris's Sparrows each repeated twice; one Harris's Sparrow and a Brown Thrasher each repeated three times.

I use a card index system in keeping my records. I enter the number corresponding to the number of the band, the name of the bird, sex if possible, and any unusual features about the bird. This card is practically a duplicate of the one which is sent to the Bureau of Biological Survey at Washington.

SIoux CITY, IOWA.

UNOFFICIAL BIRD BANDING

BY T. C. S.

A good deal of unofficial bird tagging is going on from time to time, which is heard of only through the newspapers. The latest to reach our attention is the